

STATEMENT ON THE DISAFFILIATION OF AMERICAN UNITARIAN
YOUTH FROM THE WORLD FEDERATION OF DEMOCRATIC YOUTH

By the American Unitarian Youth Council, July 8, 1948,
Tulsa, Oklahoma

At the recent American Unitarian Youth Convention at Stillwater, Oklahoma, the delegates of local A.U.Y. groups voted to terminate the A.U.Y. affiliation with the World Federation of Democratic Youth. In order to make the Convention's position clear and to avoid misunderstanding of this action, the Convention asked the A.U.Y. Council to draw up a statement telling why A.U.Y. ended its affiliation with the W.F.D.Y. Although we cannot pretend to know the individual motivations of each delegate, all of us at the Council meeting were at the Convention and can set forth the main reasons expressed by the delegates for taking this action.

Decision to Re-Examine WFDY

As those who have followed the A.U.Y. picture will remember, the A.U.Y. affiliated with W.F.D.Y. in 1946 after hearing the report of its president, Betty Green, who had attended the organizing conference of the W.F.D.Y. in London during her term as president. The 1947 A.U.Y. Convention voted to re-examine the whole question at the 1948 Convention pending the drawing up of a complete report on the W.F.D.Y. During most of 1947-1948 a committee of A.U.Y. made such a study and their final report was released early in May. This report tried to give an objective picture of the W.F.D.Y. and ended by giving the reasons both for and against re-affiliation. This briefly is the background in regard to the relations of A.U.Y. with W.F.D.Y.

At the Convention numerous publications from the W.F.D.Y. were distributed and a pro-W.F.D.Y. film was shown. Fullest discussion of the issue was held informally throughout the week. There was also full argument in the Co-ordinations Commission which studied the matter, and the final vote came after an hour and a half's debate on the Convention floor. Two points must be emphasized. First, absolute freedom of discussion was allowed with the maximum of democratic participation. Secondly, the delegates did not vote blindly but had studied the matter thoroughly, both prior to the Convention and during it. This study of the issue brought forth the main reasons on which A.U.Y. based the termination of its affiliation.

Conclusions Which Were Reached

It became clear that the W.F.D.Y. had violated its constitution at several points. The organization had failed to call a Constitutional Congress by 1948 as provided by its constitution. The group had furthermore suspended the membership of one of its secretaries and several of the Scandinavian youth organizations without the Executive Committee's meeting as provided in the Constitution.

The next point that became clear was that the W.F.D.Y. could by no means claim the support of the youth of the world. In the United States, for instance, the only other organizations affiliated with the W.F.D.Y., to the knowledge of A.U.Y., are the Universalist Youth Fellowship and the American Youth for a Free World. In Europe the organizations affiliated are for the

most part communist groups. The last large group not in this category, the Student Christian Movement of Great Britain, disaffiliated just prior to the A.U.Y. Convention. This statement cannot go into a detailed analysis of the communist character of the W.F.D.Y. affiliates, but those wishing to substantiate this fact should obtain a copy of the A.U.Y.'s W.F.D.Y. report.

The choice before A.U.Y. seemed to be whether to recognize the W.F.D.Y.'s nature and continue to work with it in the hope of making it a more representative organization or else to end connections with it. A substitute amendment providing for affiliation on a non-political basis was overwhelmingly defeated because it was felt that such an affiliation would give A.U.Y. no voice in the W.F.D.Y., and yet would bind A.U.Y. to endorsing in effect the W.F.D.Y.'s policies. The Convention did not wish to take a step away from international co-operation. It was felt, however, that the W.F.D.Y. was not promoting international co-operation, but was in reality defeating this purpose by using its influence to widen the gulf between East and West and by not providing channels for full youth participation.

Principle of International Co-operation Reaffirmed

The last point that the Convention wished to make extremely clear was that this action in no way meant a renunciation of belief in the principle of international understanding and co-operation. The final resolution emphasized this point strongly. Moreover, the A.U.Y. has a representative in Europe this summer. His itinerary includes religious conferences, an international youth conference in London, and a visit to a Unitarian work-camp in England.

The American Unitarian Youth co-operates with and will continue to co-operate with organizations that are dedicated to international understanding in the real sense of the word. The A.U.Y. wishes to co-operate with democratic organizations, but it will not take international co-operation at the expense of renouncing the A.U.Y.'s purposes and subverting itself completely to a political organization which allows no channels for minority representation.

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